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TAGS: TBIO PTER EAGR APEC
SUBJECT: THAILAND: APEC FOOD DEFENSE PILOT PROJECT

REF: A. E-MAIL 10/21/2008 CHEUNG/FULLERTON
1B. BANGKOK 2453 (THAILAND SUPPORTS FOOD DEFENSE INITIATIVE)
1C. STATE 83232 (EXPANSION OF APEC FOOD DEFENSE PILOT PROJECTS)
1D. 06 STATE 184154 (FIRST APEC FOOD DEFENSE WORKSHOP - BANGKOK)

11. (SBU) Embassy Bangkok believes that Thailand is a strong candidate to host an APEC Food Defense pilot project in 2009, per criteria provided in ref C. Our Economic Section and the Foreign Agricultural Service reviewed Thailand's suitability for the project and also discussed the pilot project proposal with contacts at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Public Health.

12. (U) Within ASEAN and APEC, Thailand seeks to be regional leader on food issues (food security, food defense, and food safety). Thailand is a major food processor and exporter to the world. In 2007, Thailand exported more than \$27 billion in food and agricultural products (including aquaculture and forestry products), while importing approximately \$8 billion.

The United States, Thailand's largest trading partner, is the third largest destination for Thailand's agricultural exports, totaling more than \$3 billion. U.S. agricultural exports to Thailand totaled \$870 million in 2007, while U.S. fish and forestry product exports totaled \$98 million.

13. (SBU) Given the magnitude of Thailand's food processing sector, the country could face significant losses if a terrorist attack occurred within its food chain. We have a positive and strong working relationship with Thailand on agricultural issues, and our counterterrorism cooperation remains robust. While technical barriers for the import of some U.S. agricultural products exist, we would not expect the Thai government to use the food defense initiative as a means for erecting additional technical barriers to trade.

14. (SBU) The Thai government remains very interested in pursuing the potential project, according to Morakot Sriswasdi, Counselor at the Department of International Economic Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Jongkolnee Vithayarungruangsri, Director of the Food Safety Operation Center in the Ministry of Public Health. Morakot and Jongkolnee told Econoff on October 24 that they believed Malaysia had already been selected for next year's pilot project, but if Thailand is still under consideration, they would enthusiastically support the proposal. Morakot added that since Thailand had already hosted the 2006 Food Defense Workshop (ref D), the Thai government would not be opposed to supporting the project in one of its fellow ASEAN neighbors.

15. (SBU) We expect that the costs of a pilot project could become an issue if Thailand was selected, particularly if the project was to occur in the next calendar year. Post understands that for the first pilot project in Peru, FAS was

able to secure P.L. 480 funding for the Peruvian Government to fund the project. Without similar resources for Thailand, Post believes the USG should be prepared to contribute significantly to the cost of the pilot project if Thailand is selected.

JOHN